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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001469

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: COR UPDATE: BYLAWS COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED;
MASHADANI SOUNDS MULTIPLE CROSS-SECTARIAN NOTES

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Michael J. Adler for Reasons
1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: At their May 3 session, Council of Representatives (CoR) members appeared to take in stride security concerns, building maintenance problems, and occasional outbursts from the floor to appoint a committee to draw up a list of internal bylaws. Speaker Mahmud al-Mashadani gave a temperate speech calling for national unity and honest discourse within the CoR on important issues such as sectarianism. In his religious references, he mentioned elements of both the Shia and Sunni traditions. The one concrete result of this meeting was the naming of an 11-member Bylaws Committee, charged with presenting a draft to the CoR Speaker by Wednesday, May 10. END SUMMARY.

Atmosphere Still Boisterous

¶2. (SBU) Speaker Mahmud al-Mashadani opened the CoR May 3 session before a full house. Among the most prominent present were SCIRI leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, Tawafuq leader Adnan al-Dulaymi, Hewan leader Saleh Mutlak, Deputy Prime Minister Rowsch Shaways, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, former TNA Speaker Hachem al-Hassani, and former TNA Deputy Speaker Husayn al-Shahristani. Mashadani began by reading the agenda for the day's session: form a temporary committee to draft the internal bylaws and discuss forming a temporary Constitutional Review committee. Kurdish member Saadi Barzinji immediately interrupted to demand that the seating arrangements be changed to allow members to sit by bloc, rather than in alphabetical order. This would allow them to confer quickly if necessary during debates rather than forcing them to shift around, he claimed. Mashadani reminded Barzinji that he should ask to be recognized before speaking, and that the issue could be set aside for another time.

¶3. (SBU) Mashadani then began his welcome speech, urging the CoR to use the political process to help Iraq move forward. Mashadani had three main points:

-- UNITY OF PURPOSE: While the members all came from different backgrounds and political groups, "they would all be judged equally in the eyes of Allah and the Iraqi people." We are all descendants of Ali, Hussein, Omar, and Khalid, Mashadani said in a striking cross-sectarian manner, and should treat each other as such.

-- DIALOGUE IS THE SOLUTION: The members should also confront issues head on, he added. The sectarian problem in Iraq can and should be resolved through dialogue, especially in the CoR. He offered three guidelines for success: the CoR must organize itself before it can lead; members should advise

each other rather than accuse each other; and everyone must remember that no one is perfect, "only Allah and his twelve Imams." (NOTE: The reference to the twelve Imams from Mashadani, an avowed Salafist, is striking.)

-- TOLERANCE OF OTHER VIEWPOINTS: CoR members should be free to speak their minds without fear of repression. "We need to respect other opinions," said Mashadani, and disagreement is "healthy and necessary" for lasting solutions to Iraq's issues. If necessary, Mashadani reminded CoR members, the CoR can remove observers and cameras and hold a closed session for a more honest discussion.

¶4. (C) Sunni Arab member Mithal al-Alusi then engaged Mashadani in a heated exchange as to the propriety of his speech. Al-Alusi accused Mashadani of patronizing parliamentarians, who were all aware of these points and did not need to be lectured like children. Mashadani retorted that some members were new, and that al-Alusi was sending the wrong message as a former TNA member by breaking protocol to interrupt the Speaker. Al-Alusi also took issue with Mashadani's statement that Iraqis all descended from the same ancestors: "Some here today used to salute Saddam Hussein," he exclaimed. Later on in the session, Sadrist member Baha al-Araji urged the CoR to evict all the "visitors." (Note: an apparent reference to US Embassy personnel observing the session. End Note). Mashadani retorted that the observers were present as guests and that Arab culture preserved their rights; he did agree, however, to consider the suggestion for the next session.

The Bylaws Committee

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¶5. (SBU) The CoR nominated an 11-member ad hoc committee to draft the bylaws. The group, which was approved as a package by the CoR, is:

-- UIC/Shia Coalition: Husayn al-Shahristani, Abbas al-Bayati, Hassan al-Shammari, Iman al-Assadi, and Hassan al-Seneid

-- Kurdish Alliance: Muhsin Saadun and Khalid Salam al-Shwany

-- Tawafuq: Nur al-Din al-Hayali and Salim al-Jiburi

-- Iraqiyya: Wa'el Abd al-Latif

-- All small groups and independents: Mohammad Ali al-Jiburi

The committee will be given copies of five sets of bylaws and the members will be free to pick and choose from any of those regulations. Mashadani instructed the group to deliver a draft by May 10.

Other Business

¶6. (SBU) Two other issues were raised during the May 3 session: a suggestion from Kurdish members Saadi Barzinji and Nawzad Rafat for the CoR to issue a statement condemning hostilities on the Iraqi-Iranian and Iraqi-Turkish borders, and a proposal by Tawafuq's Abd al-Karim al-Samarrai to elect all CoR committee chairmen by consensus. On the borders issue, Iraqiyya's Wa'el Abd al-Latif and Hamid Majid Musa urged the CoR to ask for explanations from the Ministers of Interior and Defense before issuing a statement, and Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari downplayed the seriousness of the situation on the borders and suggested leaving the issue to the Foreign Ministry. On selecting committee chairmen, UIC/Shia Coalition member Abbas al-Bayati stated that due to the election results, the UIC would naturally lead the

committees. At this, new Kurdish Alliance CoR member Tania Gilly replied that democracy meant sharing power, not using it to control the whole legislature.

¶17. (C) Before moving on to the final set of issues, however, the CoR asked all nonmembers, including Convention Center staffers, to leave the room. Kurdish Christian member Fawzi Hariri told PolOffs afterwards that the closed session discussions were about members' salaries and complaints over inconsistent policies at checkpoints.

¶18. (C) In a sidebar conversation, Iraqiyya's Hussein Ali al-Sha'alan told POL FSN that his list's "demand" for a Deputy PM position is essentially a tactic to get more important ministries. Sha'alan declined, however, to indicate which ministries the party leadership had in mind. (NOTE: At a May 2 dinner attended by PolOffs, Ayad Allawi affirmed particular interest in the Defense, Communications and Finance Ministries. The consensus of the dinner guests, mostly former IIG members, was that Falah al-Naqib, Osama al-Najafi or Hachem al-Hassani should be at Defense. Iraqiyya member Saad al-Janabi said he hoped to pursue the Communications Ministry.)

Comment

¶19. (C) After the session, the Convention Center area was shut down for three hours reportedly because of an anonymous caller claiming that there were three unexploded car bombs in a nearby parking lot. Members took this in stride as some discussed ongoing negotiations over cabinet posts. Curiously, none of the Sunni Arab members appeared concerned about the lack of discussion over the Constitution Review committee, supposedly one of the key issues for them. They did leave a marker, however, to challenge the Shia Alliance for leadership of some of the CoR's committees.
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